

# *Heritage Mzinigan*

# **Biboon 2025**



# Aaniin Boozhoo

It has been a while since the last Mzinigan. Miigwech for reading. We have received consistent praise for the Mzinigan and are grateful for the comments as well as the knowledge that the Mzinigan is helping you learn more about yourself, your ancestors, and Rama as a whole.

This season's Mzinigan looks at the Williams Treaties, the curious case of a disappearing wampum belt, and of course, stories and pictures from the archives. If there are topics you want to read about next season, let us know! Miigwech.



## Box with quilled battle scene, Royal Ontario Museum

This quill box was created by Jonathon York(e), "Mesaquab", in 1904. Commissioned by an Orillia lawyer, Mesaquab based the design off of a pictograph located at Quarry Point, near Geneva Park. The pictograph (painting on a rock) was said to tell the story of how our ancestors defeated the Naadawe (Haude-nosaunee) in war. This war led to the exchanging of the Eternal Council Fire Belt, which you'll read about later on in this Mzinigan. The quill box is currently housed off-display at the Royal Ontario Museum, but we have plans to repatriate it back to Rama in the near future.

# The Williams Treaties: 100 Years Later

It's important to talk a bit about the history before the Williams Treaties were signed, because the Williams Treaties didn't occur in a vacuum. There were a lot of situations that happened in the 150 years prior to the Williams Treaties that played a major role.

First, there were a series of "Pre-Confederation Treaties" that were signed by our ancestors and the Crown (Britain, who considered what became Canada one of their colonies).

The Collins Purchase (1785) was a dubious "surrender" where our ancestors were said to have agreed to surrender land on either side of what is now Highway 12, spanning between Lake Couchiching and Coldwater. No physical record of this treaty survived, nor did any reliable information about payment terms and exact boundaries.

Treaty 5, the Penetanguishine Purchase, was signed in 1798 and regarded the Penetanguishine harbour area.

Treaty 16, the Lake Simcoe Purchase, was signed in 1815. It concerned much of the land between Lake Simcoe and Midland.

Treaty 18, the Nottawasaga Purchase, was a massive surrender of over 2,000,000 acres between Barrie and Meaford, stretching as far south as Orangeville.

All of these Pre-Confederation Treaties resulted in our ancestors' land base dwindling from essentially all of central into lower northern Ontario to a fraction of that.

## Why did our ancestors surrender this land?

The answer is complex and we will probably never know with real certainty, simply because our ancestors voices and thoughts were never accurately and consistently transcribed. In general, historical First Nations voices are not a part of the discourse; they are relegated to being passive background decorations rather than living, breathing, autonomous figures. This is another issue for another day.

The most logical reason behind the reason for

the surrenders seems to be around a difference in worldview on what "treaty" meant. Many historians and Elders recognize now that there was and remains a discrepancy between how we, as First Nations people, view a treaty and how the Crown/government did (and continues to).

When treaties were being signed, especially in those Pre-Confederation days, our ancestors probably viewed treaties as a way to agree to share land. The concept of "owning" aki/earth was foreign. It contradicted our core beliefs of existing within the environment and being a part of it. The settlers, in contrast, saw themselves separate from the environment, and nature was a thing to be conquered and tamed. For example, the Papal Bulls issued in 1455 by Pope Nicholas V set out justification to conquer Indigenous lands. If land was without Christians, it was considered "vacant" and could then be "discovered" by Christians, where they could then claim sovereignty, dominion, and title. This of course ignores the fact that the "vacant" land was actually home to an estimated 100 million Indigenous people in 1493 (including our ancestors). Nonetheless, the Papal Bulls and Doctrine of Discovery essentially provided the international law and justification for widespread colonization and land theft, and European religious and political leaders demanded it! Thus, "owning" land was not only possible but part of the settlers' mission.

In signing a treaty, our ancestors were formalizing a friendship and a land-sharing agreement. There were words about "surrendering rights, interests" in the land, but the concept didn't translate.

Gift-giving, another core tenet of our culture, was evident in treaties too. But again, a worldview issue presented itself. Settlers used gifts (goods, money) to pay for land they intended to own rather than offer gifts out of gratitude. Once again, there was probably a misinterpretation. For thousands of years, our ancestors had been making agreements within their communities and with other Nations by agreeing to terms, shaking hands, and exchanging gifts. In fact, even in treaty discussions and at council fires, our ancestors and other First Nations people were gifting the Crown or government with a variety

of goods, including pipes, blankets, and weapons. Clearly, this was not intended to be a one-way sale transaction but a mutual agreement in which the old protocols were still in place. Our ancestors were exchanging goods and promises during treaty negotiations, just like they had done for millennia.

It's fair to surmise that a worldview difference was a core issue behind treaty misinterpretations. The

concept of owning aki was not one our ancestors were familiar with, and so they willingly "surrendered" well over 2,000,000 acres between 1785 and 1818.

It is worth noting that through all of the Pre-Confederation Treaties, although we lost "title" to the land, we retained the ability to hunt and harvest on those lands.

At the time of these treaties relations between the Crown and our ancestors were decent. At this time, by all accounts, First Nations were looked at as independent and autonomous Nations. We see proof of this in the 1764 Treaty of Niagara.

The Treaty of Niagara created an alliance between the British Crown and 24 Indigenous Nations. The Crown recognized the need for allyship and cooperation. The Covenant Chain wampum belt, created for the Treaty of Niagara, conveys the importance of Indigenous permission for the British to be in their territory. There was an agreement of mutual benefit and trust. The 1764 Treaty of Niagara and the 1763 Royal Proclamation genuinely showed that the Crown had respect for the Indigenous Nations.

All that hard work of gaining trust and friendship was undone following the War of 1812. The War of 1812, fought between the British and America, involved many First Nations warriors. Some estimates put the amount of First Nations warriors as high as 10,000. Men from Rama fought in this war, at York, and probably alongside the famous



Tecumseh in America. So many men had agreed to fight alongside the British, remembering that friendship pledged in 1764, and promises to protect the Crown. In 1812, there weren't a ton of British settlers in what became Canada, so First Nations warriors formed a large part of the British military effort in the war.

## A Change in Relationship

Following the War of 1812, the relationship between First Nations and the Crown changed. Despite First Nations warriors helping to defend what became Canada against American invasion, the Crown quickly changed its stance on First Nations. Long gone were the days of mutual benefit and recognizing Indigenous Nations as sovereign, autonomous states. By 1816 or so, the Crown had decided subjugation and oppression were the ways forward.

With ambitious plans to develop their shiny new colony, Indigenous people were not seen as part of the future. In fact, the prevalent sentiment by the Crown was that Indigenous/First Nations people were a "doomed race", and they wanted to have us "live out our days" in peace in a communal location (Manitoulin Island). These mass re-location plans, surely inspired by American Indian Relocation policies, did not come to fruition. Instead, the Crown's plan became: isolate First Nations in small communities, rid them of their traditional territories, and enforce the uptake of Euro-Canadian lifestyles and values.

## Coldwater

Beginning around 1830, our ancestors had the misfortune of essentially being guinea pigs for colonization experiments. The so-called Coldwater Narrows Experiment was one of the first major, formalized attempts at assimilation but also the first reserve in Canada.

The Crown had set aside 10,000 acres of land between Orillia and Coldwater, land they'd obtained earlier during the Collins Purchase. Our ancestors were told to re-locate to this reserve of land and they would be free from the harassment and influence of European settlers.

At this reserve, our ancestors were expected to take up the European methods of farming (using European tools and crops); lifestyle (dormant, tending to fields, not roaming traditional hunting grounds); beliefs (religious conversion, abandon Anishinaabe Aadiziwin), and education (children attend school, adults learn how to adopt European practices and norms).

In exchange, our ancestors were promised goods, supplies, and the land itself.

Evidently, a lot had changed in 30 years. It was as late as 1816 that our ancestors and many other Indigenous Nations were still respected and viewed as self-governing Nations by the Crown. And yet, 30 years later, our ancestors were essentially being rounded up and relocated to a 10,000 acre reserve, and told to totally abandon everything that made them Anishinaabe.

Our ancestors did in fact move to Coldwater. They became adept farmers, to the point that a mill was built in Coldwater to harvest their wheat yields). Much of the land alongside the old portage route now known as Highway 12 was cleared by our ancestors. They built homes and barns and crafted a life for themselves.

By 1836, again, the plan changed. The Crown was largely dissatisfied with our ancestors “progress” towards assimilation. Compounding matters was the fact that settlers were flooding into the area and were eager to take up the recently cleared land that made up our reserve. This included what today is downtown Orillia. Competing religious officials in particular had a strong effect on the Crown, as they petitioned heavily to utilize some of the buildings our ancestors had built to deliver their sermons. The Methodists and Anglican sects were in competition not only for buildings, but for who had access to our ancestors, as they represented an opportunity of mass religious conversions.

The Crown considered the settlers’ petitioning as well as the fact that our ancestors didn’t completely assimilate and abandon their Anishinaabe identity and way of life overnight, and summoned



our Chiefs to York.

Chiefs Yellowhead, Aissance, and Snake went to York (now Toronto) and met with the government. The result of the meeting was the Coldwater Narrows reserve was allegedly surrendered. Our ancestors were told to get off of the reserve land and from there, had few options.

The result was a split in the community, which the government had taken to calling The Chippewas of Lakes Huron and Simcoe. Chief Yellowhead went to Atherley, and then Chief Island and Rama. Chief Aissance went to Beausoleil Island, later moving to Christian Island. Chief Snake went to Snake Island, later moving to Georgina Island.

Today, we know these communities as Rama, Beausoleil First Nation, and the Chippewas of Georgina Island. We retain a strong political alliance with our “sister communities” called the Chippewa Tri-Council, and at the personal level, many of us have cousins or friends on the two islands. It is a reflection of our old connection, dating back to when we were one big community.

## Relocation, Again

Following the alleged Coldwater Narrows Reserve surrender, our ancestors were on the move again. First, to Chief Island, where our ancestors followed Chief Island. A few years later, there was a small community there, joined of course by religious missionaries, who built a small school on the island.

Before long, Chief Yellowhead had begun negotiating with Indian Affairs for land on the mainland. Vacant farmland in Rama Township became identified as available to purchase. Chief Yellowhead used community annuities to purchase approximately 3,200 acres in Rama Township. The land was abandoned farmland, left idle due to its rough landscape and poor soils.

Around 1838, Yellowhead and those who’d followed him to Chief Island began the move to Rama Township. They became known as the “Rama Indians”.

By 1848, more land was purchased. Initially, the plans were to purchase quite a bit more land than what was actually purchased.

Through reasons that are unclear, Yellowhead was told there was no more money to purchase the initially agreed upon acreage, and so he had to settle for what was obtained. The result was a "checkerboard" style reserve, which we still have today, in which you can be on and off reserve several times between either end of Rama Road.

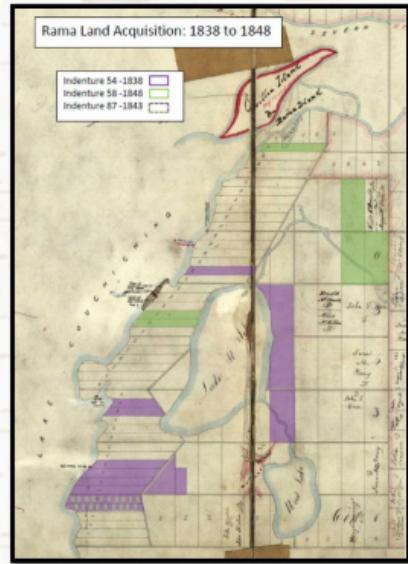
Our ancestors started to settle in Rama township during the late 1840s. They cleared land for gardens, discovered medicines and places like Wiikwadoonsing (in the Ojibway Bay Marina area today). They built houses and made them homes. Our ancestors still went north into Misko Aki (Muskoka), the place named after Chief Yellowhead's father, Musquakie (or "Misko Aki" - red earth). They visited the Misko Aki region to hunt, harvest, and fish.

Before long, the colonial and religious reach spread to our people once again. A church was built, the old limestone church near what is today Ojibway Drive. A short while later, in the early 1900's, the United Church was built along Rama Road. Around the same time, the first school house and council hall was built. The school house was soon replaced by the Rama Indian Day School, which many of our people attended between 1909-1960.

## Settlers and Misko Aki

Towards the end of the 1800s, our ancestors noticed traversing into Misko Aki was increasingly frustrating. The beauty of Misko Aki was becoming world-renowned. So much so that the government wanted to open up Misko Aki to settlers and development.

This was difficult at first. The only way into Misko Aki was via water (Lake Simcoe -> Lake Couchiching -> Severn River -> portage to Lake Muskoka) or by the rough and physically exhausting courdory roads and rudimentary trails. Misko Aki, due to the travel difficulties,



was really only visited by our ancestors and ambitious fur traders or explorers for most of its more recent history.

However, the railway carved its way through bush and granite and by 1876, it had arrived in Gravenhurst. Settlers had a way into Misko Aki which was efficient, quick, and most importantly, easy.

The new ease of travel plus Free Land Grants changed the future of Misko Aki. Free Land Grants were what the name implied: grants of land, for free. There were some conditions. If you were over 18, you could receive 100 acres. If you had a family, you could receive 200 acres. Within 5 years, you needed to commit to clearing 15 acres land, and have 2 acres under cultivation. Free Land Grant obtainees also had to build a home that was at least 16' x 20', and continually reside on the land for at least 5 years. Conditions or not, this was an excellent opportunity (and deal) for many settlers. By 1881, there were over 13,000 settlers in Muskoka, 7,000 more than there were in 1870. As a sidenote, this is how many of the "4th generation" or "5th generation" Muskokans first obtained their cottage land (now worth millions). Wealth was generated from land that was taken from our ancestors.

The Free Land Grants also kicked off the era of tourism in Misko Aki. As more visitors came to the area, word spread, and before long, Misko Aki had dozens of resorts throughout the region. By the early 1900's, world class musicians and famous celebrities were visiting Misko Aki, a trend which continues today.

The government however, had made a critical error. They'd been giving away thousands of acres of land, encouraging settlement and resource extraction (especially timber) for decades. The issue was the government never actually obtained "title" to all of those lands. They had essentially just assumed the land was theirs (a theme consistent with the early referenced Doctrine of Discovery) because it seemed vacant.

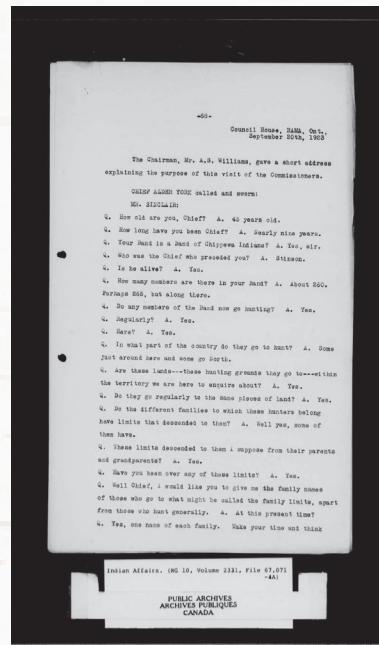
Our ancestors had been complaining to the government that our hunting grounds were being spoiled. They were occupied by settlers or destroyed environmentally through logging or development. For a long time, the claims fell on deaf ears.

The government began to investigate the history of title of Misko Aki (and many more areas) and recognized and admitted they did not have title to a significant amount of land. The government decided to attempt to rectify the error. The Williams Commission was formed, led by A.S. Williams, Indian Affairs Legal Counsel.

In the Williams Commission, a team of Indian Affairs staffers interviewed community members from what we know now as the Williams Treaties First Nations (Rama, Curve Lake, Beausoleil, Georgina Island, Hiawatha, Alderville, and Scugog). The ancestors were asked where they hunted, how they got to their hunting grounds, who went with them, how long they went for, if their fathers or grandfathers hunted, and a number of similar questions. The goal was to find out whether or not the ancestors truly had a connection to these lands. The Williams Commission found out that all seven First Nations did indeed have a historic connection to the lands in question.

Following the Commission, the Williams Treaties were drawn up. There were actually three separate tracts of land involved (hence the plural “treaties”). The largest tract of land was for our ancestors hunting grounds in Misko Aki and beyond. There were two smaller tracts further south, which the Michi Saagiig (Mississaugas) used. When it was all said and done, nearly 13,000,000 acres were formally surrendered, lands which had been stolen and sold by the government and settlers many times over all without permission or title.

In exchange for 13,000,000 acres of land, our ancestors received \$25 per community member (equal to about \$396 today) and the communities received around \$230,000 (equal to roughly \$4 million today). In sum, the government paid \$250,000 (\$4.3 million today) for nearly 13,000,000 acres of land.



The Rama signatories to the Williams Treaties were Ogimaa Alder York, J.P. Stinson, David Simcoe, Samuel Snake, Edward W. King, Alfred Williams, and John Bigwin.

## Aftermath

Our ancestors surely assumed that getting something for lands which they had little access to was better than nothing. Each member received a decent sum (at the time) and the communities' annuities were bolstered (eventually) by the larger sum.

Our ancestors did not anticipate that in signing the Williams Treaties, their hunting and harvesting rights would be removed. This was unprecedent. All the Pre-Confederation treaties our ancestors signed mentioned nothing about retaining or removing hunting and harvesting rights, and yet they remained. The Williams Treaties had a paragraph stating,

“...surrender all the right, title, interest, claim, demand and privileges whatsoever of the said Indians, in, to, upon or in respect of all other lands, situate in the Province of Ontario to which they ever had, now have, or now claim to have any right, title, interest, claim, demand or privileges, except such reserves as have heretofore been set apart for them by His Majesty the King”

The government misinterpreted paragraphs such as this one to mean that our ancestors no longer had the right to hunt or harvest in the treaty lands. Furthermore, they removed our rights to hunt and harvest in the Pre-Confederation treaties, too.

Instantly, our ancestors began petitioning the government for change. People such as John Bigwin were adamant that our rights were stolen and they ought to be returned, and yet, the government ignored their complaints.

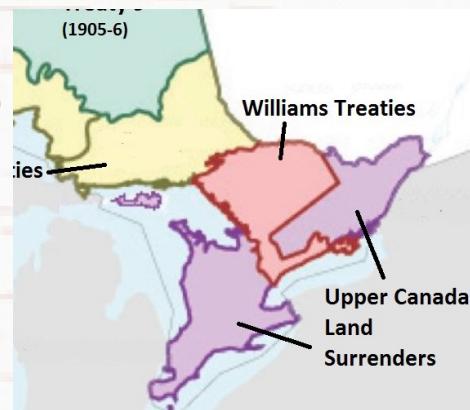
## Change

Unable to live off the land, as our ancestors did for millennia, a change in lifestyle was needed. Our ancestors began working in lumber mills or as labourers. Many men worked as guides, in a cruel twist of irony, showing tourists the best places to hunt and fish in lands which they were forbidden to do so themselves.

Still, it was a way to utilize their traditional knowledge and skills to earn a bit of money.

Women sold their crafts to tourists and locals; quill-boxes, clothing, baskets, and just about anything else they could make were popular items for settlers to purchase.

Once again, our ancestors' perseverance and industriousness shone, and they endured. In the span of about 150 years, from 1800-1950, they were forced to completely change their way of life. At the same time, they were being told that everything that made them Anishinaabeg was wrong, and they needed to assimilate into a new culture and identity. Our existence today is a testament to their strength.



Rama continued to grow. By the mid-1900's there were a few hundred people living in Rama. It was a hard life. Many remember a lack of work and poverty, with no resources or infrastructure. But still, we persevered.

## Justice

Throughout all of the community's history, there remained a sense of injustice towards the Williams Treaties. There were complaints about a lack of full payment, undervalued lands, and of course, the loss of hunting and harvesting rights. Every First Nation in Canada had the ability to live off the land, just like generations before them had. But the Williams Treaties First Nations did not.

In 1992, litigation was launched against Canada in regards to the Williams Treaties. It was argued that the 13,000,000 acres of land were undervalued, and that our harvesting rights were unjustly denied.

The legal case was exhausting. Financially, emotionally, physically, spiritually, all current and past Williams Treaties First Nations Chief and Councils were exhausted. Thousands of hours of

work went into the case.

In 2015, the case went to out-of-court talks for settlement. In 2017, a settlement was agreed. Finally, after nearly 100 years of fighting, a settlement was agreed in 2018.

Financial restitution of \$1.1 billion was awarded to the seven First Nations (\$666 million from the federal government and \$444 million from the provincial government).

An official apology was delivered by the federal government.

An agreement of up to 11,000 additional acres of reserve land was made.

Most importantly, harvesting rights were restored in Pre-Confederation treaty areas.

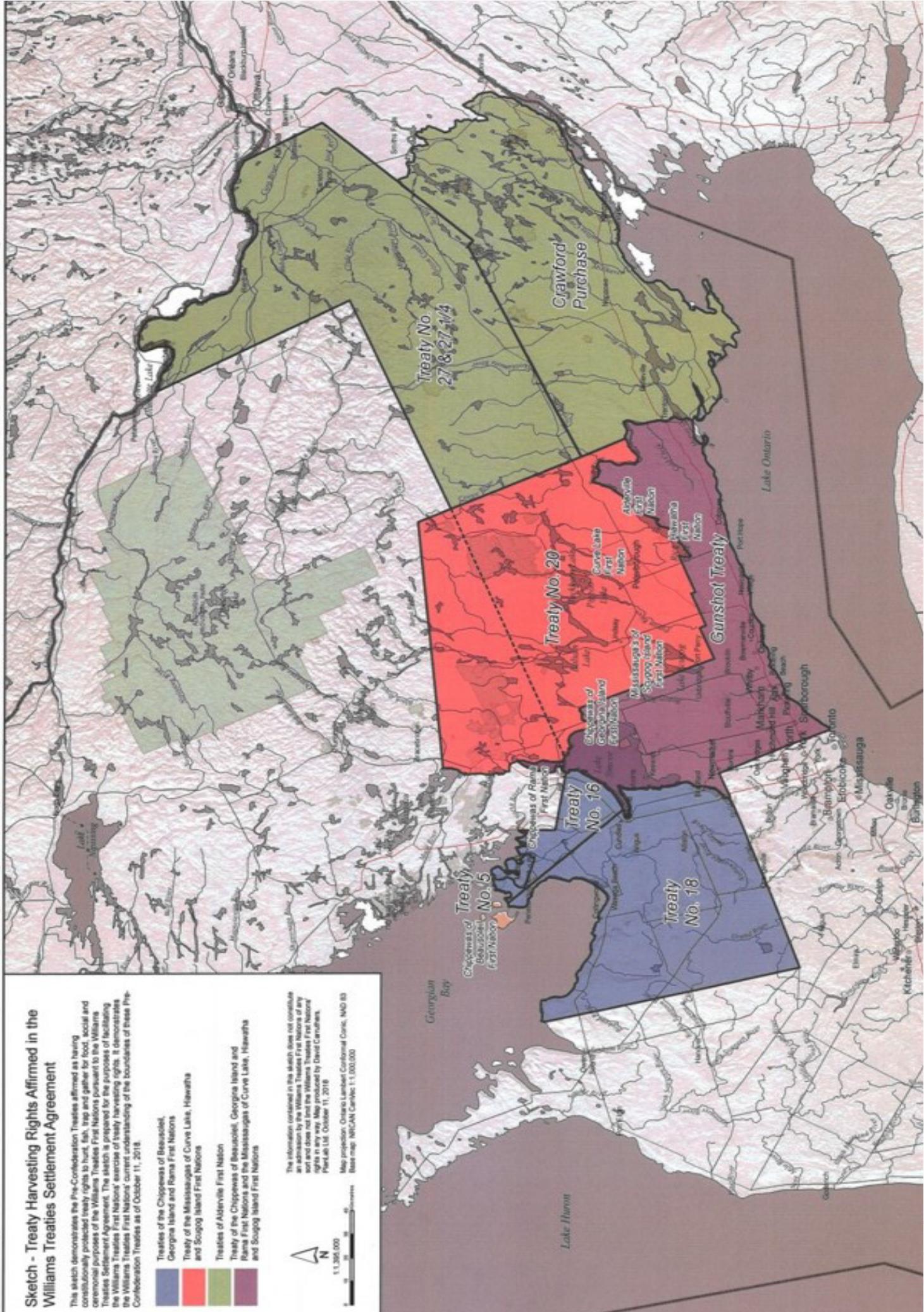
## Today

In October 2023, we held a Williams Treaties Centennial event at Casino Rama. About 250 people, mostly members of the Williams Treaties First Nations, attended. Presenters spoke about the harm and the legacy of the Williams Treaties. Their impact on our communities was devastating.

All of the presenters spoke of the need to get out in the bush; to harvest, hunt, and fish. They reminded attendees that our ancestors struggled and fought for so long for those rights and we need to make the most of them.

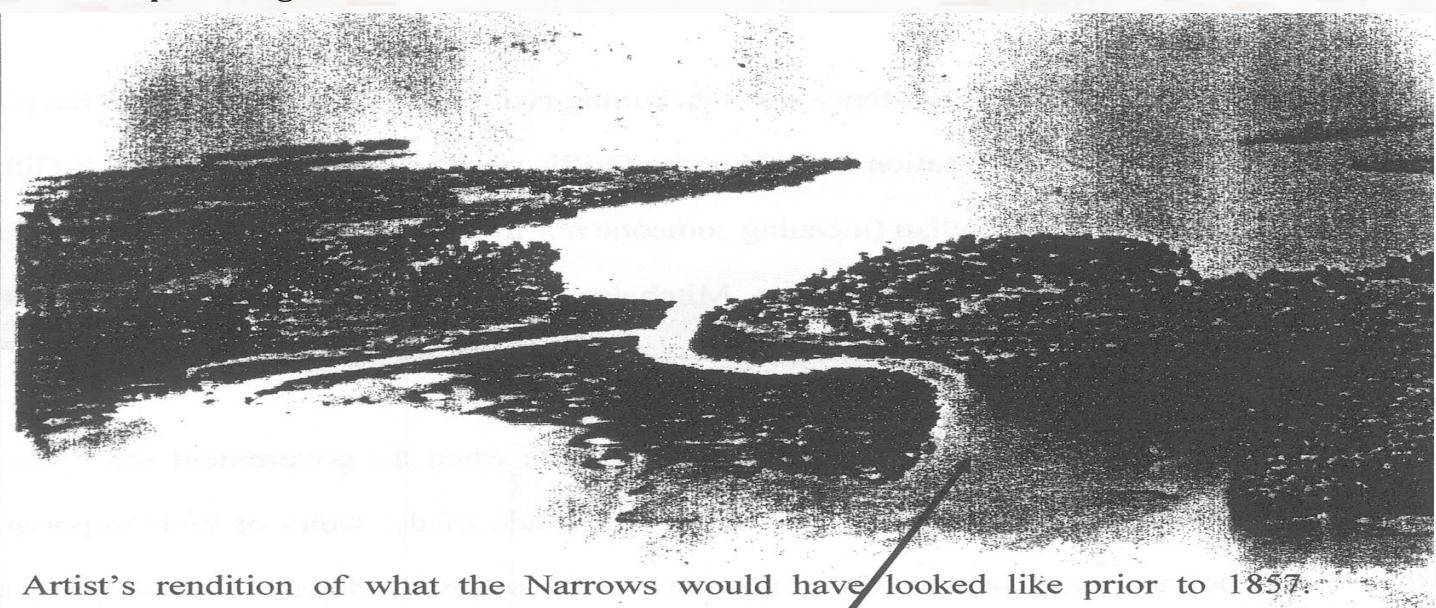
Today, our community is looking at ways to reclaim all of traditional ecological knowledge we lost in the past 100 years. In Rama, we have a growing contingent of hunters, harvesters, and fishers. People are re-learning the medicines and the land. Our Heritage Place recently hired a Kiing Ekinomaaged - a land-based learning coordinator. Exciting land-based programs will be a big part of the future in Rama. We are trying to reclaim all of the knowledge and skills that we have forgotten since the Williams Treaties were signed.

The worst part of our history is over, and we are excited for a proud and progressive future.





Above: Our ancestors routes from Mnjikaning into hunting territories. It would've taken several days or even weeks to reach northern hunting grounds. Image borrowed from Muskoka Discovery Centre.  
Below: A fascinating rendition of what the Atherley Narrows may have looked like, before dredging and developments. The water would've been several feet shallower, and our ancestors spent hundreds of summers camped along the narrows' shorelines.



Courtesy of Parks Canada.

# Whereabouts Unknown: The Eternal Council Fire Wampum Belt

Written by Clayton Samuel King

*Gchi miigwech to Anishinaabe Historian and Researcher Clayton King (Beausoleil First Nation) for permission to re-print this fascinating article!*

For many decades several Indigenous historians and knowledge keepers have shared their time to educate the public about the importance of wampum in sacred agreements made between the French, British and Native Nations. The use of wampum strings and wampum belts are utilized as a mnemonic device and share a deeper connection through the use of oral interpretation that codified agreements between native nations throughout the Great Lakes region to the east coast of North America.

One wampum belt that has been discussed in previous years is the one carried by Chief William Yellowhead. William Yellowhead was the Head Chief of the Chippewas of Lakes Huron and Simcoe from c.1817 - 1864. The wampum belt that he carried was one of the belts that represented the treaty of peace and friendship between the Anishinaabek and the Haudenosaunee confederacies. No specific date was ever recorded as to when this belt was given to the Anishinaabek by the Haudenosaunee. It is believed by some historians that the belt and peace agreement happened somewhere between 1695 and the time of the Great Peace Treaty of Montreal in 1701, after the Anishinaabek, Wendat-Petun, and other Great Lakes First Nations had driven the Haudenosaunee back south of Lake Ontario. This conflict lasted over a half a century throughout the Great Lakes territory.

Yellowheads belt has been noted in a few publications throughout history. The importance of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship Five Council Fire Wampum Belt that Chief William Yellowhead carried is an important part of history. Throughout this written work Yellowhead's wampum belt will be titled "The Eternal Council Fire Wampum Belt."

One reference discussed in the past about the description and importance of this wampum belt was recorded by the Reverend Peter Jones in the meeting minutes he took when he attended a Grand Council of Native Chiefs at the Credit River in January of 1840. At this meeting there were two interpretations of this belt given, which were later provided in writing; where the Anishinaabek

and Haudenosaunee people renewed their peace agreement. These descriptions were taken from the speeches of Rama First Nation Chief William Yellowhead, and Kanien'kéha:ka (Mohawk) Chief John Smoke Johnson.

In Chief Yellowhead's interpretation of this treaty, he describes the place of the fourth council fire in detail in which he states that:

"The 4th mark represents the Council fire lighted up at the Narrows of Lake Simcoe at which place was put a White Rein Deer. To him the Rein Deer was committed to [the] keeping of this Wampum talk."

Chief Yellowhead recognized himself as being part of the Reindeer Clan or Adik Doodem in the Anishinaabemowin language.

When Chief John Smoke Johnson interpreted the 4th mark of this belt in his speech, he recited that:

"fourthly, the emblem of a white deer placed at Lake Simcoe, signified superiority; the dish + ladles at the same place indicated abundance of game and food."

It is known that William Yellowhead ended up receiving his chieftainship from his father Chief Misquakie. Chief Misquakie lead the warriors of Lakes Huron and Simcoe during the war of 1812 and was "badly wounded by two musket balls"<sup>4</sup> during the battle of York in April 1813. "After this battle, the Younger William Yellowhead was appointed an Indian Chief, and about four summers later, at the desire of his father, became the principal chief, a position which he held until his death in 1864"

It is important to note that even though William Yellowhead was made the principal chief at the Narrows of Lakes Simcoe and Couchiching,



he wasn't the only chief at Mnjikaning during the time of the Grand Council of Chiefs in 1840 at the Credit River. During the 1830's, 1840's and 1850's many other chiefs at the Narrows of Lake Simcoe and Couchiching, and Rama had affixed their clan inscription on many documents and made many decisions to help benefit their people. The many notable chiefs at this time were Chief Nanigishkung (Man who shakes the earth), Adik Doodem (Reindeer Clan), Chief Big Shilling, Adik Doodem (Reindeer Clan), Chief George Young, Mitig Doodem (Birch Bark or White Oak Clan), Kaiskaiosay, Mitig Doodem (Birch Bark or White Oak Clan) and Chief James Bigwind, Adik Doodem (Reindeer Clan). James Bigwind was the 2nd Chief to Chief William Yellowhead. These two chiefs were supporters of the Anglican church representatives in their community and were from the Reindeer Clan.

During the 1840's Chief's Nanigishkung, Big Shilling and their supporters were often at odds with Chief William Yellowhead. Around this same time Chiefs Nanigishkung and Big Shilling had the support of their followers, which mandated them to persuade the British Government of the recently formed Province of Canada to deal with their petitions and complaints against Chief William Yellowhead and the decisions he had made.

At this time the Rama band often seemed to be split between two factions. There were several complaints lodged and petitions written by the Rama Band against William Yellowhead. Some of these complaints recorded described the unequal distribution of the annual presents and treaty annuities, as well as the exclusion of the children ten years and younger from receiving annual presents. The opposing chiefs felt Yellowhead insulted them as well by his action of giving the local tavern keeper a blanket out of their presents, while the chiefs received nothing to honour and distinguish them as leaders.

Chief Nanigishkung, Big Shilling and their followers had made their decision in 1845 to no longer acknowledge Yellowhead as their Chief and leader because he kept them in the dark about his decision making. They had all agreed and decided that Thomas Nanigishkung would be their new Chief, as he was the Grandson of their Old Chief Kenice. This portion of the band had also agreed that Chief Big Shilling and 9 young men would form the council to help the Chief in their

affairs. This document was signed by 34 principal family head men from Rama.

Who was Chief Yellowhead's ancestors and how did they come into possession of the Eternal Council Fire Wampum Belt? Who were the forefathers of the Rama Band and the Chippewas of Lakes Huron and Simcoe that had fought against the Haudenosaunee in the 1700's? Who were the principal chiefs who took part in the Treaty of Peace between the Haudenosaunee and the Ojibway of Lakes Simcoe and Huron? Yellowhead had stated in his speech at the Grand Council in 1840 that:

"the Belt was given by the Nahdooways to the Ojibway many years ago, about the time the French first came to this country."

In 1843, the Chief Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Samuel Peter Jarvis had requested "a statement of the generation of chiefs"<sup>10</sup> at Lake Simcoe to help determine who were the hereditary chiefs of the Lake Simcoe area. Thomas Shilling, son of Chief Big Shilling gave the following account while he was living at Snake Island:

"1 Nikike, the first Chief on Lake Simcoe who came from Mississageen on Lake Huron, before the war with the Mohawks, who owned the Lake at that time.

2nd Osh ka be wis, War Chief the son of [the] 1st made war with the Mohawks, conquered them + took possession of the Lake.

3rd Minda me ness the son of 2nd; the chief of the Mohawks came to him and gave him peaceable Possession of the Lake

4th Wah yah be qin the Son of 3rd not chief

5th Mane do wain the Son of 4th not chief

6th Nebe naun a quot the son of the 5th at present taken the name of Big Shilling who is now Chief \_\_\_\_ my Father

1st Wa taws se yah ne \_\_\_\_ not chief \_\_\_\_ came from Montreal in the time that Minda Me ness was chief

2nd Peshikie Made chief by the French the son of the first, he was made chief instead of 4 Wah yah be qin

3rd Wa sau win de bay Brother of Peshickie made war chief by the British

4 Ke nis, the son of 2nd, the chief who sold the first land to the British belonging to the Simcoe Indians

5th Nainekish Kong grand son to 4th Kenis living now  
6th Mis quac kie son to 3rd (war chief, Wa sau win de bay  
7th May a wasino, or William Yellowhead son of the 6th Mis quac kie"

According to this detailed account of the history of chiefs from Lake Simcoe, Thomas Shilling list's the family lines of Thomas Nanigishkung, William Yellowhead and Big Shilling. This information also describes how the French and British had influence on First Nation leaders as to who could become a chief. This early influence corrupted the hereditary line of chieftainship of the Shilling family until Big Shilling/Niibin Aanakwad (Summer Cloud) was recognized as one of the Chief's at the Narrows of Lakes Simcoe and then, at Rama when the band relocated from the Narrows of Lakes Couchiching and Lake Simcoe (Orillia, ON) in 1838. Could it be possible that Wa-sau-win-de-bay and Misquakie are the same person? Little information exists or has been made available to the public on Wa-sau-win-de-bay during the revolutionary war. More research is required. Also, it wasn't uncommon for an Anishinaabe to have more than one name during his or her lifetime. Sometimes a new name would be given to a person by spiritual and traditional healers when that person recovered from a serious sickness or near death experience.

Thomas Shilling's list also shows that there were three chiefs who could have gone by the name Yellow Head. The first being Wa-sau-win-de-bay, when translated to English means Yellow Head. The second was Misquackie, who was known as Yellow Head. When his name is translated into English it means Red Earth. The third was Misquackie's son May-a-wasino or William Yellowhead. In the historical narrative, many academics and historical researchers have concluded that there have only been two chiefs who went by the English name Yellowhead. Some even relate the name of Yellowhead being associated with Captain Thomas Gummersall Anderson, because of Anderson's blond hair. Captain Anderson had arrived at Penetanguishene in 1829, after being a clerk with the Indian Department at Drummond Island.<sup>12</sup> Chief Misquackie was documented as Yellow Head three decades prior to the arrival of Captain Anderson at Penetanguishene.

With Wa-sau-win-de-bay being made a war chief by the British and becoming chief before Kenis, could it be possible that both men committed themselves and their First Nation forces from Lake Simcoe and Huron to ally with the British during the American Revolutionary War of Independence?

According to Thomas Shilling's list of Chiefs, when the Kanien'kéha:ka (Mohawk) had made peace with Chief Mindameness, it could be possible that the Kanien'kéha:ka chief might have gifted the Eternal Council Fire Wampum Belt to the Ojibway and Chief Mindameness of Lake Simcoe. William Yellowhead's Great Uncle Peshikie might have carried the Eternal Council Fire Wampum Belt when the chieftainship of Lake Simcoe had changed families during the time of the French regime. This belt could have been passed along with each change of leadership throughout the following generations, eventually being gifted to and carried by Chief William Yellowhead.

Chief Kenise was recorded as being the Chief at Lake Simcoe during Governor Simcoe's exploratory voyage up to Matchedash Bay in late September 1793. On Simcoe's return to York, he was notified while on the south shore of Lake Simcoe that the old Chief Kenise had passed away. Kenise's son: "the Great Sail" was also recorded during this voyage as well. It is important to note that in Thomas Shilling's list of Lake Simcoe Chiefs and family lineages, the name Great Sail, for the abovementioned chief, was absent. According to the historic/archival and written record, Kenise and his son Great Sail, both prominent chiefs at Lake Simcoe, were known to use their names interchangeably. When the older Chief Kenise passed away, one of his other son's passed away as well during the time period of Simcoe's voyage to Matchedash Bay from York.

In 1845 the Rama band had agreed to have Thomas Nanigishkung as their head chief, and that he was the grandson of the Old Chief Kenise. It is not known at this time if "Great Sail" the younger was the father of Chief Nanigishkung, or if old Chief Kenise had any other children. In the written record of the 1820's, 30's and 40's there are other men at Rama and the Narrows who went by the surname Kenise and Nanigishkung, as well as the name "Kitche-incossino (Big Sail)."

Even though Misquakie's name isn't recorded on the Penetanguishene Provisional Agreement of 1795 or the Penetanguishene Pre-confederate Treaty #5 of 1798, Misquakie, also known as Yellow Head, was a notable head Chief at Lake Simcoe and Huron after the death of Chief Kenise. Misquakie's name appears in the British record as early as May 22nd, 1796 during a speech of Chippewa

Chiefs that was recorded by interpreter George Cowan. Misquakie's brother War Chief Akepatwewe was also recorded by Cowan. The Yellow Head's speech was recorded again at the Military Post at York on September 11, 1797, where the description of the minutes taken conveyed that Chief Yellowhead was "accompanied by several other Chiefs, and about one hundred and forty Indians from Lake Simcoe."

He was also titled Chief of the Mississauga's at this meeting. Some of the British authorities present at this meeting were Major Shank, Major Smith and Lieutenant Givens. Lieutenant Givens was known as "the Wolf" by the Anishinaabek. Misquakie had petitioned the government at this time and stated that:

"Sir William Johnson and Col. Butler used formerly to give us like other Indians attached to the British Government Annual Presents; and altho we have complained repeatedly, we have received very little for several years past."

Misquakie was a renowned Chief who fought for Tecumseh's cause and was an ally to the British in the War of 1812. His son William Yellowhead also fought with his father and 70 plus warriors from the Lakes Simcoe and Huron area. This number of First Nation warriors from Lake Simcoe and Huron who participated in the War of 1812 was given after the war by the Reverend John Strachan.

Misquakie and his son William Yellowhead both went by the name Yellowhead. The name Mus-



CANISE (Great Sail).

Great Sail - Son of Old Chief Kenise:  
Drawing created by Elizabeth Simcoe

quakie was written into the Pre-confederate Treaty #16 in 181521, with Chief Assance and Chief Snake, and the name Musquakie/Yellow Head is also written on Pre-confederate Treaty #18, in 1818. Chief Misquakie passed away in the fall of 1821.23 Soon after Old Chief Misquakie's death, his son William Yellowhead became the head chief at Lake Simcoe.

Misquakie's son William Yellowhead was also known by different names. British writer Anna B. Jamieson described William Yellowhead as being one of the most distinguished chiefs at a Grand Council in 1837 at Manitoulin Island. She also wrote down Chief William Yellowhead's Anishinaabe name as "Wai,sow,win,de,bay (the Yellow-head)." In a petition to Sir George Arthur, Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, written in 1840, William Yellowhead's written Anishinaabemowin name was spelt as "May-a-wossino." The name "May-a-wossino (Yellowhead)" was also written on the pay list of the 1838 First Nation's Warriors of Lakes Huron and Simcoe who had participated as allies with the British at Hollands Landing at the time of W. L. Mackenzie's Upper Canada Rebellion.

Chief William Yellowhead later died on January 12, 1864, at the age of about 100 years old according to archival records. When examining the Government Census of 1861 for Rama, William Yellowhead is listed as being 100 years old at that time. If this is correct, William Yellowhead would have been around 103 years old when he passed away. Members of the Rama Band indicated that Chief Yellowhead had returned home from a hunting trip just after Christmas of 1863 and had gotten sick and eventually passed away a few weeks later. It is remarkable to think that a man over the age of 100 would still be out hunting and travelling several miles away from his home.

Chief William Yellowhead's will, and last testament was written on September 20th, 1861. In his will, it was written that he had appointed his nephew Isaac Yellowhead as his sole heir and successor to the chieftainship of the Chippewa Tribe.28 There is no record to show that Isaac Yellowhead ever succeeded his uncle as the Chief at Rama. Prior to the death of Chief William Yellowhead, Chief Thomas Nanigishkung had nominated his son Joseph Benson Nanigishkung as his successor to perpetual chieftainship in 1858.

After the death of Chief William Yellowhead, Joseph Benson Nanigishking was recognized as the only Hereditary Chief of the Band. He was the chief at Rama until October 12th, 1896.

"Your petitioner Chief Naingiscaing of Rama is far advanced in years, infirm and in bad health; has a Son Joseph Benson Naingiscaing who is well educated in the English Language and of unblemished Character; That your said petitioner Chief Naingiscaing and the Indians in Council assembled at Rama, are desirous of having his said Son Joseph Benson Naingiscaing, appointed a Chief."

Almost a year after Chief William Yellowheads death, his nephew Isaac Yellowhead petitioned his claim to succeed his uncle as the head chief at Rama. Isaac Yellowhead stated in his petition that it was his late uncles desire that he should succeed him as the hereditary chief, and this was proven by the will that Chief Yellowhead had left. In this petition Isaac also specified that his

"Grandfather was Hereditary Chief and fought with his Band in the great revolutionary war for the British Government,"

and that his uncle and "his father fought together at the time York was taken by the Americans, in that occasion the old chief was wounded + his life was saved by his son."

After Chief William Yellowhead's death in 1864, the Eternal Council Fire Wampum Belt might have been discussed once more. There is no information given about this wampum belt in Chief William Yellowhead's will that was written on September 20th, 1861. Chief Joseph B. Nani-gishkung of Rama wrote a reply letter to visiting Superintendent of Indian Affairs William Bartlett regarding Chief Yellowheads medals. He had written that he employed Chief George Young to visit Chief Yellowheads widow. Elizabeth Yellowhead had let Chief Young know that she had "deposited the old chiefs medal + wampum inside the old chiefs coffin with the corpse, but she has two more medals in her possession which she will not deliver to the Tribe." Could this wampum be the Eternal Council Fire Wampum Belt?

Perhaps it was burnt at Chief Yellowhead's camp in 1847 when a "fire destroyed all the writings he held belonging to the tribe" as corresponded by the Chiefs of Lakes Huron and Simcoe in a peti-

tion to James Bruce, 8th Earl of Elgin, Governor General of the Province of Canada at this time. Also in this petition, the chiefs had requested for "copies of all the surrenders of Lands to the Government, and the conditions of the same" to replace the ones that were burnt in the fire.

Chief William Yellowhead was buried at St. James Anglican Church in Orillia, Ontario. It was documented that Yellowhead's "grave was originally just in front of the then church but when the present St. James' Church was under construction, in 1890, his was one of the bodies moved to make way for the excavations, and the exact place of his burial is not now known."

The question of where Chief William Yellowhead's 2nd grave site location was had been investigated by Charles Harold Hale. Hale had asked Joseph Yellowhead in November of 1961 where the old chief's grave site was. He answered that he had thought he knew the original burial place, because as a schoolboy, prior to the erection of the brick church in 1890 the old stone church was torn down, he witnessed a body being dug up just outside the Peter Street side of the old church, which was said to be that of Chief Yellow head.

Although it is said that Chief William Yellowhead's body was moved, a Mr. Frank Moffatt tells a different story.



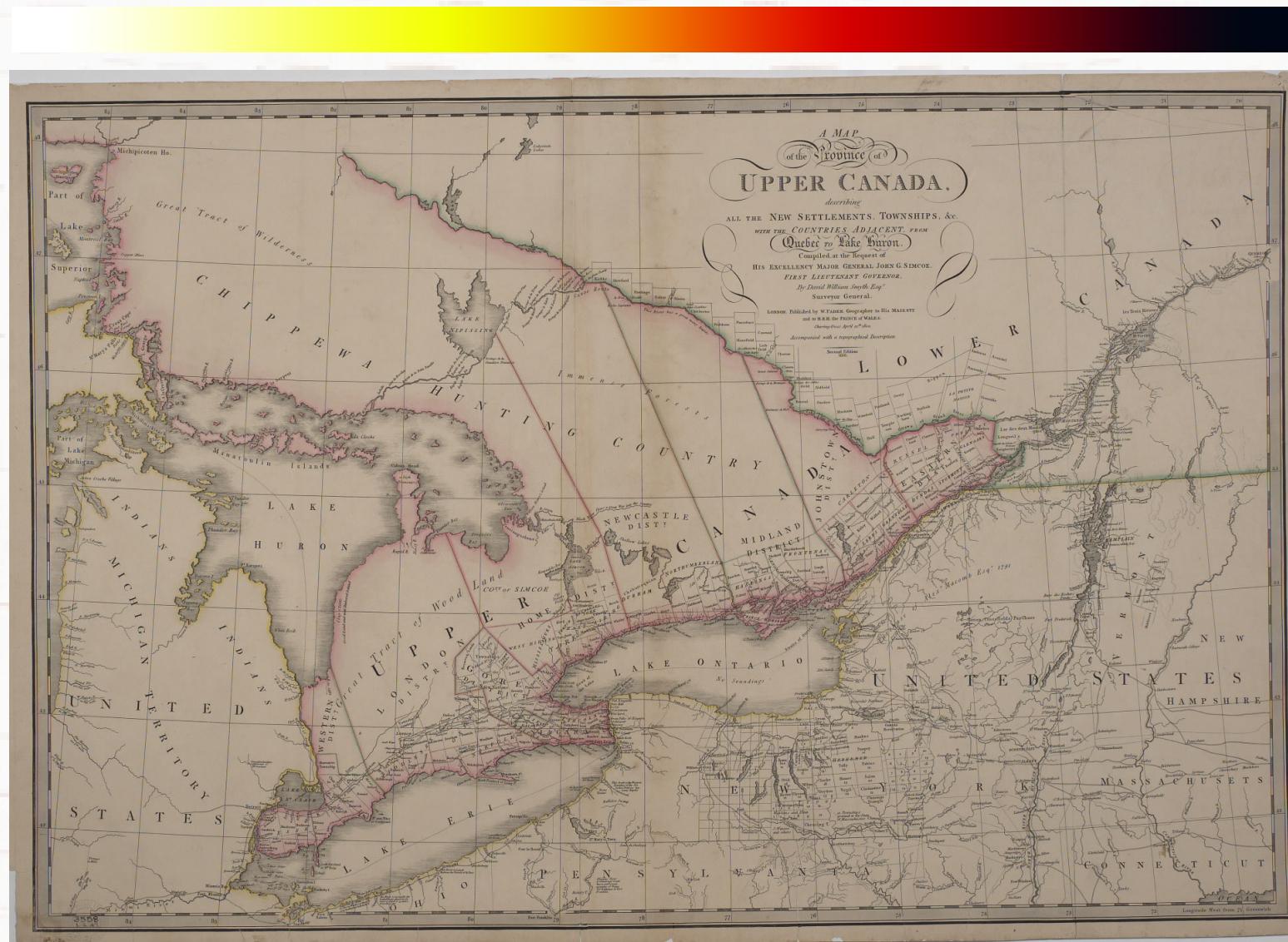
St James Church, Orillia, 1948-1950

"Frank Moffatt, a grandson of Andrew Moffatt, one of the teachers of the Indians from 1832 to 1834, tells me that this was a mistake. So he had been told by his grandfather, who showed him, (a boy of 10) the spot where Yellowhead was buried. It was exactly 32 feet east along Coldwater Street from the corner of Peter Street, and ten feet back from Coldwater Street. Since Mr. Moffatt knew Yellowhead well, and was present at his funeral in 1864 he would know where he was buried, and his bones will still be there, though the spot is unmarked."

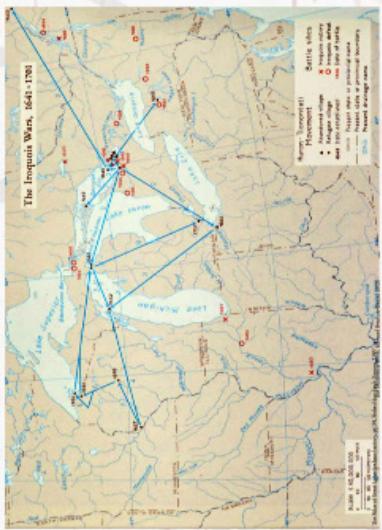
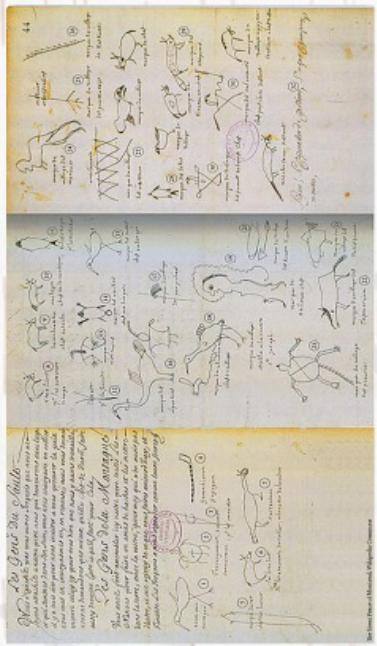
In the testimonies that Charles Harold Hale had documented, there is no mention of the Eternal Council Fire Wampum Belt being buried with Chief William Yellowhead, or whether it was with him when the body was presumed to be dug up in 1890.

It is undetermined as to what the Eternal Council Fire Wampum Belt originally looked like. There were never any photographs or rubbings taken of it. Through the explanations and descriptions that were written down at the Grand Council at the Credit River in January of 1840, and the rough notes that the Rev. Peter Jones had provided, experts of Anishinaabek and Haudenosaunee wampum belt iconography have determined what it might have looked like through the interpretations of Chief William Yellowhead and Chief John Smoke Johnson, as well as with the symbology used in the past for other wampum belts. Replicas of this belt have been created by Brian Charles, a band member of the Chippewas of Georgian Island. The interpretation of the Eternal Council Fire Wampum Belt and other notable wampum belts have been shared several times throughout the past decade by Anishinaabek historians such as Brian Charles and Dr. Alan Ojiig Corbiere.

Although the whereabouts of the Eternal Council Fire Wampum Belt is unknown at the present time, perhaps one day it will be found in someone's attic, basement or ancient trunk that hasn't been opened in generations. Or maybe it was the wampum that Eliza Yellowhead said she buried with her husband Chief Yellowhead. Maybe one day we will know for certain.



A Map of the Province of Upper Canada describing all the settlements and townships, 1818 Source: Toronto Public Library. Note how much of Northern Ontario is simply surveyed as "Chippewa Hunting Country". As late as 1818, the *giawedan kiin* (north lands) were still exclusively Indigenous places. Beyond a few fur traders or land prospectors, our ancestors roamed their ancient territories freely, and the lands looked as they had for millennia.



**LONG AGO**

The Migration of the Anishinaabeg. Our ancestors, the Anishinaabeg, migrated from Eastern Canada, in search of places prophesized to be sacred. Some of the seven stopping places included Waynaag-gakabikawaang (Niagara Falls), Mnidoo Mnisi (Manitoulin Island), and lastly, Madeline Island.

### 1500s

Much of Simcoe County was known as "Wendake", which was home to the Wendat. Rama's ancestors were further north in Msko-Aki (Musuko) and the north eastern shores of Mnidoo Gamii (Georgian Bay) and Odawaawi-gichigami (Lake Huron), but traveled to current-day Rama area regularly. Most Ojibway communities were in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Northern Ontario.

Oral history tells us that long ago, we lived around Mjikaning. We moved further north to help our allies the Wendat try to escape wars with the Haudenosaunee.

### 1640s-1701

After being devastated by French diseases, the Wendat were dispersed from the area after a series of battles with the Haudenosaunee. The Haudenosaunee were then firmly in control of much of central and southern Ontario and the fur trade. Rama's ancestors continue to live in the areas of Mnidoo Gamii (Georgian Bay) and Odawaawi gichigami (Lake Huron).

### 1650s

Samuel de Champlain arrived in Wendake, paving the way for widespread exploration and settling. His journals and maps opened a "New World" for immigrants, who were empowered by racist and genocidal "laws" and beliefs such as the Doctrine of Discovery.

### 1701

The Great Peace of Montreal is agreed, which ends decades of intertribal warfare, improves Nation-to-Nation relationships, and also boosts French immigration. 39 Nations and 1300 delegates attend.

### 1700s

After a chaotic 150 years, The Anishinaabeg consider much of the territory north of Lake Ontario their territory. Inter-tribal and inter-colonial wars have stopped. The French ceded what became Canada to the British in the Treaty of Paris. The American Revolution resulted in American Independence from Britain. Britain began to focus on colonial expansion in Canada, encouraging settlement and development. Our ancestors are caught in the middle.

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The Migration of the Anishinaabeg, a 5,000 year old fish trap made of birchbark and stones, found in a shallow lake in Ontario. Our ancestors took it to its former home from this song (place) (over a mile thousand feet) hunting in over thousands of years. It now sits in a museum in Ontario.





*The Indian Act became law, resulting in paternalistic laws governing the lives of our ancestors. The Act*

*restricted the ability of our ancestors to live freely; they were constantly under the eye of Indian Agents and Indian Affairs. The Act also dismantled our traditional governance system, outlawed our ceremonies and dancing, created the pass system, and mandated attendance at residential or day schools. The Indian Act remains in effect today.*

**1876**

The Rama stone church was built in the area of Ojibway Drive and Victoria Park Road. The church was used regularly until the early 1900's. It remained standing until 1952, when it was damaged by tornado and later demolished.

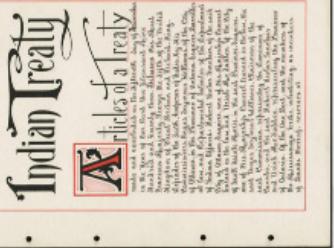


*The Rama United Church was built.*

*Originally a Methodist church, it changed to a United Church in the 1920's. The building of the United Church resulted in a slow abandonment of the stone church. Like many other First Nations in Canada, Rama has had a long history of religion in the community. Missionaries and different sects of Christianity were consistently competing to be the authoritative church in the community.*

**1891**

The Rama day school was built and Rama children began attending. The day school replaced the school room built in 1891. The day school suffered from poor funding, inconsistent teacher staffing, and an inherently colonial curriculum and mission. Rama children had differing experiences at the school.



*Following the alleged surrender of the Coldwater Narrows Reserve in 1836, some of our ancestors briefly moved to Chief Island, most moved to Rama, and a few remained at the Narrows. In 1918, the last family moved from the Narrows to Rama. Since the last family left, our old village at the Narrows/Mnjikaning has been transformed into a heavily developed area of condos, restaurants, and marinas.*

**1909**

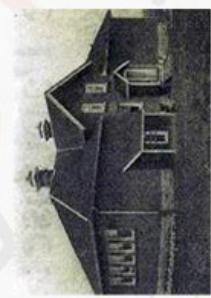
**Early-1900's**

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**1918**

**1914-1918**

*World War I was fought across Europe. Over 30 Rama men voluntarily enlisted and fought for Canada. As non-citizens of Canada, our ancestors weren't required to serve. Yet, honouring promises their ancestors made to always be ready to protect their lands and serve the Crown, they enlisted and sailed across the Atlantic Ocean to join the Allied Forces. First Nations warriors were important members of the military. First Nations veterans, including those from Rama, returned home heroes, but without the benefits or assistance provided to non-First Nations veterans.*



*Chief Jim Awa's 31 Comrades*

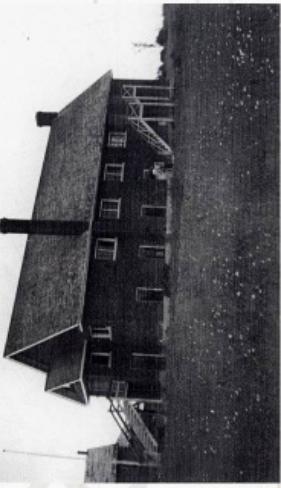


*House and Elders 1918*

**1923**

**1928**

*The Williams Treaties were signed by Rama and six other First Nations. Over 12,000,000 acres were surrendered. The government misinterpreted treaties and it resulted in loss of hunting and harvesting abilities for the seven signatory Nations. The Williams Treaties were immediately contested by our ancestors, who found themselves unable to live off the land due to restricted rights to hunt and harvest.*





Construction on the Rama Daycare began in 1975 and the daycare opened its doors in May 1976. A community-led initiative, the daycare started the legacy of providing safe and happy educational environments for the youngest people in Rama.



1975-1976



Rama elected its first female member of government (councillor), Florence Shilling. The RCMP began policing Rama. The arrival of the RCMP meant the Indian Agent left Rama.

First Nations people were finally granted the right to vote in Canada.

1960s



1969 Black River Wilderness Park opened. A location hidden in the bush beside Black River has been a special place for the community and visiting campers alike since the park opened.

undertook, and proved to be the first of many.



The government begins moving away from residential schools and instead begins focusing on taking Indigenous children and placing them in non-Indigenous homes. This practice becomes known as the "60's Scoop" and it had major devastating effects in Rama. This causes a lifetime of pain for many.

1954



1969 Black River Wilderness Park opened. A location hidden in the bush beside Black River has been a special place for the community and visiting campers alike since the park opened.

underwork, and proved to be the first of many.

**1968**  
The Ojibway Bay Marina was built and opened to the public. The Marina was one of the first economic development initiatives the community

undertook, and proved to be the first of many.

1975-1976



Santford Street

World War II is fought across Europe. Over 500,000 men and women enlist and fight for Canada. Again, First Nations' contributions help win the war. Again, the First Nations veterans who made it home were treated differently than non-First Nations veterans. In some cases, First Nations veterans learned they had lost their First Nations status due to being away from home for so long. Many learned they didn't qualify for land or homes provided to non-First Nations veterans.

1939-1945



Cannington Shilling



Benjamin SAWYER



1977  
Rama Van-in raises funds for community development.

Late 1970s  
A community health nurse begins visiting the community.

1982  
The NADAP program comes to Rama to help the community.

1985  
Bill C31 is also made law. Rama Plastics opens. The revitalization of culture begins (powwows, regalia, teachings).

1987  
Ojibway World opens, a one-year project on the shores of Lake Couchiching

1994  
Rama elects its first female Chief, Lorraine McRae. The next 10 Year Rama Visioning Process occurs. In December, Rama wins bid over 14 others to build the first commercial casino on First Nations land.

1994

1980  
The Rama industrial mall is built, stimulating economic development as well as creating stable, year-round employment.

1984  
Rama's first 10 year Visioning Process occurs. The first Rama community hall is demolished and a new one is constructed soon after.

1986  
The first Rama Powwow is held. The Rama church receives its log addition.

1989

Rama ensures clean drinking water for the future by building a water tower and water treatment plant.

1994





Casino Rama opens its doors. The process to opening the casino was long and arduous but at long last, it was finished. Visitors flock to Rama and our community becomes a very busy place. The casino ensures a strong future for Rama. The Biidaaban Mnjikinng Community Model of Restorative Justice is created, the first set of traffic lights are installed, and at last, the final residential school in Canada closes its doors for good.

Rama First Nation builds Mnjikinng Kendaaawin Elementary School (MKES), a school for children from JK-Grade 8. Our families finally have the option to have our children educated in our own community. The seniors complex also opens in this year.

A mini- community visioning was conducted as most of the previous priorities were completed. A referendum was held to "Break the Trust"; the Waasa Gdi Naabmin trust, established in 1998, and \$10,000 is distributed to each band member.

**1996**

Bill C3 is passed. Signing of the Post-2011 Agreement occurs.

**2015**

Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, including the 94 Calls To Action.

Rama opens its new Facilities building. Rama hosts the 2015 Community Visioning.

**1997**

Rama builds a sports complex, called the Mnjikinng Arena Sports Ki (MASK). The MASK contains a library, offices, a gym, and ice surface. Rama Fire and Rescue also begin operating as a 24/7 fire department, replacing the previously volunteer-only service.

**1999**

Rama obtains its own police service, Rama Police Service. They are trained by OPP and protect the community 24/7.

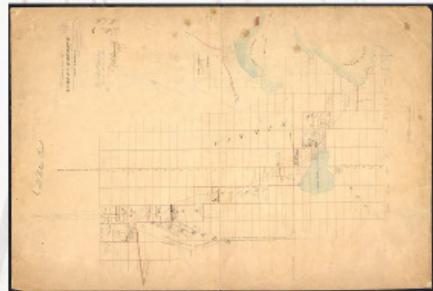
**2000**

The Rama First Nation Ojibwe Language Dictionary is written and published by Irene Snache. The first official Water Ceremony is held. The next Rama 10 year Visioning Process is conducted.

**2010**

The Coldwater Land Claim Settlement is finalized, 174 years after the surrender and 19 years after being submitted. \$307 million dollars is awarded to the Chippewas Tri-Council (Rama, Beausoleil, Georgina, as well as Nawash).

**2012**





The Chippewas of Rama community opts into the First Nations Elections Act, changing its government's tenure in office from 2 years to 4 years. In March, Rama joined the First Nations Lands Management System. The first Tim Hortons opens in Rama.

The Williams Treaties First Nations Settlement Agreement is finalized, resulting in \$1.1 billion being distributed to the seven signatory nations, as well as additional reserve lands, restored hunting and harvesting rights, and apologies from government. Land Designation vote is successful, ensuring a proud and progressive future for Rama.

2016

Black River Wilderness Park re-opens to the public. Rama joins the Anishinabek Education System. C.A.S. Apology to First Nations & Indigenous Children

2019

Habitat for Humanity Community Partnership build completed. Rama restored century-old gravestones on Chief Island, and acknowledged all unmarked graves with a new monument.



Rama holds its first Anishinaabe Giizhigad on June 6th. Declaration of Anishinaabemowin as Rama's first language. Indigenous authors gathering is held in Rama. Giiwedin Ki (formerly OELC), purchased in spring 2022. Mnoyaawgamig (House of Well Being) opens in June. Muskoka Area Indigenous Liaison Table Friendship Accord.

2022

A new bonnet and eagle staff are presented to Chief Williams and Rama First Nation. Truth and Reconciliation Day is commemorated for the first time on September 30th. On the same day, the Sixties Scoop Commemorative Pathway is unveiled. Rama Cannabis opens.

2021



2020

# Dbaajmowinan / Stories.

Traditionally, biboon was a time for sharing stories. In the early 1900s, our ancestors had some of their stories transcribed, called "Ojibwa Myths and Tales". They are insightful, humorous, crude, and sometimes even scary views into how our ancestors made sense of the world. Common themes were little people, Windigos, Mohawks, serpents, and Nanabush.

## Windigos (Giants). Told by Peter York.

In olden times people used to believe that if a person fasted for a period of about ten or twelve days he would learn something about bears or lions, or something very strong, and if he dreamed of any of these animals he would be just as strong.

One time a man had a dream that he could fight with the Wintigoes any time. He could be just as big and just as strong, and during one winter time he knew that the "Wintigo was coming to eat them (i.e. his family). He said to his wife "The "Wintigo is coming to-night, and is going to eat us. and if my dream fails we shall be eaten by the Wintigo." The night came and the man went out to meet the Wintigo a little way off. The wife listened for a little while, then she heard trees flying all over and she saw two great, big men biting each other and hitting each other with great, big trees, and also with their hands.

This kept on for a long time, till all at once it went past, and she watched if her man would come home. After a while he came out of the woods just as small as he was when he went out to fight. He said, "I won the battle for the first time since I had my dream. You come over with me and I will show you where I finished the Wintigo." They both went out till they came to the place where they saw, as if somebody had been underbrushing, so fierce was the battle that all the underbrush and small trees were knocked or trampled down. At the far end of this place they saw a great big man lying down dead, with his big kettle and a great big knife, for the Wintigo was going to kill and eat these people. So the man and wife went to work and gathered up wood and made a big fire and burned the Wintigo to ashes.

## Little Lynx Story. Told by Peter York

Black Bear had a very good winter one time. It was a very hard winter for the smaller animals on account of the snow and frost and storms. This big Black Bear used to go on the deer runways and

catch a deer and eat him up, and the Lynx used to watch the Black Bear climb up in a tree and jump on the deer as they passed along the runways, which they had in the winter months, and which was an easy thing for a big black bear to do.

Once when the Lynx was very hungry he could not catch anything as there was too much snow. Well, he thought that he would try and kill a deer, so he went out on one of their runways and watched for a deer to come along. Soon he saw one coming and he climbed up a tree and when the deer came under the tree the Lynx jumped on his back. The Deer started off wild and went all over the woods, but the Lynx still held on having a good hold and the Deer could not shake him off.

The Deer knew that there was a leaning tree in the bush so he made for that, knowing that he could knock the Lynx off as he ran under the tree. The Deer ran very fast and as he ran under the tree there happened to be a knot on the under side of the tree where the Deer went, so the Lynx got his back skinned from his head to his tail. It also just happened that an Indian was out hunting that way and tracking deer. He saw a deer track which was a very bad one with blood all over. So he followed it up till he came to the Lynx lying dead and a little farther on he found the Big Buck dead too. The Deer had got so tired that he lay down and died. So the Indian had good luck finding them both.

## Monster Fish. Told by Peter York.

There is a monster fish living in Lake Simcoe. His tail is at Thorah Island and his head is at Shanty Bay. The monster fish eats all the sturgeon, and that is the reason there are no sturgeon in Lake Simcoe.

## The Elm Tree. Told by Kenneth G. Snake.

Long ago, when the Ojibways and Mohawks were quarrelling, the Mohawks were pursuing the Ojibways. One family was behind, and they had a paupoose with them. The Mohawks were catching up

to them, so the woman ran to an elm tree and laid her baby down and asked the tree to mind it while she was running away. She said that she would help the tree if the tree minded her baby. So she had to leave her baby behind and run on with her man to hide someplace. After three days time, they went back. When they got back, they saw their baby was playing with the tree. The tree would bend down and let the baby play with its leaves. When they got near, they were going to feed the baby, but the baby would not eat, as the tree had given it something to eat. So the woman praised the tree and told it that from that day on the elm tree would be tall and look over many trees.

So that is why the elm tree is tall and has its branches bending down to show it really mended the baby.

#### **Why the Porcupine Has Quills. Told by Kenneth G. Snake**

Long, long ago, when Nanabush was around, the porcupines had no quills on them.

A porcupine was out in the woods when a bear came along. The bear would have eaten him, but the porcupine managed to climb to the top of a tree where the bear could not get him. The next day, the porcupine was out again, and he walked under a hawthorn tree. He noticed how the thorns pricked him. He began to break off the branches and put them on his back. Then he went into the woods and along came the bear. The bear sprang up on the porcupine, but the porcupine just curled himself up, and the bear had to go away, for the thorns pricked him very much.

Nanabush was watching the bear and the porcupine. He called porcupine over and asked him, "how do you know such a trick?". The porcupine told him, explaining how he was in danger whenever bear was near.

Then Nanabush took some thorns and peeled the bark off them until they were all white. He put some clay on the back of the porcupine and then stuck the thorns in it, and then he made it in the shape of a skin, and then he told the porcupine to go into the woods. When he got there, and Nanabush had hidden himself behind a tree, along came the wolf who sprang on the porcupine, then ran away because of the quills.

The bear did not go near him because he was afraid of those quills. And that is why the porcupines have quills today.

#### **Monsters. Told by Jonas George.**

These monsters, which are about twelve feet long and about one and a half to two feet thick, and have long jaws full of teeth, and look like half-fish and half-snake, live in hills near lakes. They have underground passes from the hills to the water, and can sometimes be seen early in the morning. In small lakes and bays of larger lakes, they move around with great swiftness, forcing the weeds and floating sticks high up on the shore, similar to swirling your hand around in a washbasin. Sometimes they do this with so much force that they leave the small lakes partially dry. One of these monsters lives in the hill just north of where the old Indian Portage from Lake Simcoe enters West Bay, Balsam Lake. Another lives in the hill at Atherley, Rama Reserve, Lake Couchiching, and another lives up north in a lake the name of which is now forgotten. Thunder and lightning kills these monsters.

#### **The Dwarfs. Told by Lottie Marsden.**

Did you ever hear the Indians telling the story that there are little Indians only two feet high? Persons are not allowed to see those little Indians except when something is going to happen. A long time ago they saw these little Indians very often!

One very aged old woman was travelling alone on the bush road, and she saw ahead of her a little child. She was very glad when it disappeared. Where the little Indian had been, she smelled all kinds of nice perfumed flowers. She was not allowed to catch this little Indian. It was only two feet high.

The poor Indian woman knew right away that somebody was going to die, and she lost her husband. The end of the aged old Indian woman story.

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**Please contact Ben if you want to read more of these stories at [benc@ramafirstnation.ca](mailto:benc@ramafirstnation.ca). More will be shared in future issues of the Mzinigan!**

# Rama First Nation Consultations Update

The world of consultations is rapidly growing and many First Nations are struggling to keep up.

From the Government of Canada's website: "The Government of Canada has a duty to consult and where appropriate accommodate Indigenous groups when it considers conduct that may adversely impact potential or established Aboriginal treaty rights". What this means in plain language is: if developments or changes to the landscape are going to potentially harm First Nations' ability to hunt, harvest, or fish, then First Nations must be consulted on the developments.

In 2004-2005, the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed the requirement of Duty to Consult. A few key court cases, including *Haida v British Columbia*, affirmed procedural protections for Aboriginal treaty rights. They clarified the Crown's duty to consult and also outlined a framework on how to consult. Before the 2004 and 2005 decisions, the consultation process was muddy and more responsibility was put on Indigenous communities to affirm their own treaty rights. Since 2004-2005, the Crown has had a Duty to Consult with First Nations.

In Rama's case, because we had no harvesting rights, we were not overly affected by the 2004-2005 decisions. However, once our treaty rights were restored following the 2018 Williams Treaties settlement, that changed dramatically.

Since 2018, Rama First Nation (and the other Williams Treaties communities) have been inundated with consultation requests. Many developments that happen within Williams Treaties territory, as well as the Pre-Confederation Treaty territory, are subject to Duty to Consult. These can be trivial, such as a culvert widening in Bracebridge to hugely impactful, such as the proposed Innisfil Orbit project not far from Lake Simcoe.

Rama First Nation's Law and Governance team are tasked with reviewing all Duty to Consult files. While the trivial ones often are indeed trivial, all files require attention in the event that they have the potential to affect harvesting rights. For example, if a culvert widening occurs near a creek flowing towards a major water body, there is the potential of chemical run-off polluting the wa-

ters, and consequently harming or killing fish or tainting drinking water supplies. Thus, all Duty to Consult requests have to be considered seriously.

Bigger files, such as the aforementioned Innisfil Orbit, are major undertakings. The Innisfil Orbit involves many different developers and types of development: water source supply, highways and roads, GO transit station, and significant residential and commercial buildings. All of these developments require studies and reports, which in turn are reviewed by the Rama First Nation Law and Governance team (as well as other First Nations' Consultation teams). Due to the Orbit's proximity to Lake Simcoe, we are especially concerned with the long-term health of the lake, which already struggles with rising phosphorous levels.

It can be difficult to manage opinions on whether a development should happen vs. whether it affects our treaty rights. Often, we learn of developments clear-cutting forests or paving agricultural fields or wetlands. While we always go on record as stating this is not ideal and we advocate for leaving greenspaces green, if they don't affect our harvesting rights, we have little in the way of options.

We most commonly review environmental reports and archaeological reports. These reports are conducted by various types of specialists, such as biologists or archaeologists. We review the reports scanning for potential threats to our harvesting rights, or in the case of archaeology, ensure that what is in the ground (artefacts, ancestors) is protected as best as possible.

In addition to environmental and archaeological reports, we are frequently consulted on Official Plans for townships or cities. These Official Plans set out how the region will develop in the future, preparing for demographic changes and needs. We are consulted to ensure that future plans for regions don't affect our harvesting rights.

The Law and Governance teams always insists on having Rama First Nation's brief history included in reports. This ensures that we are present and our history is read by countless

people. It's important to assert ourselves and our historical connection to our territories. In addition to our history, we always advocate for Indigenous rights and presence. We regularly recommend the procurement of Indigenous art and spaces in developments, as well as signage recognizing our presence whenever possible. We also regularly share the Rama Familial Hunting Territories Map with developers and proponents, which was derived from the 1923 Williams Commission. A copy is on the cover of this *Mzinigan*. It shows where our ancestors hunted, and as you can see, it covers much of Ontario. This is one of those small but powerful ways in which we assert our history and connection to the land.

There are countless files which the CCW (Community Consultation Worker) and Law and Governance team have worked on over the past several years. It is safe to say that if a development happens anywhere south of Bracebridge, there is a good chance that we have read about it and ensured it won't affect our harvesting rights.

While many projects will not adversely affect our harvesting rights, some have the potential to. When we flag a development as potentially having negative affects on our rights, we raise concerns with the proponent. We discuss how they are planning on mitigating negative effects. Remediation plans are often already in place, as they are required by environmental regulations. For example, cutting down trees for hydro lines typically requires replanting trees afterwards. However, "old growth" has a different ecosystem than simply replanting saplings. The new trees will not have decades of life emanating from them; they won't be known by sapsuckers or nested in by robins; they won't have insects in their soils or lichen on their bark. In time, nature will again restore itself, but the example of old growth vs. newly replanted trees is a testament of why we advocate to leave greenspaces green.

Consultation can be frustrating. When we raise our concerns, it is frequently one or two of us (First Nations consultation staff) against a team of engineers, biologists, project managers, etc. There is always a worldview difference. The developers and their teams typically can't comprehend the way we view the environment and how we are much more connected to it than they are. For them, it represents a job and profit. For us, it represents life. Concerns are often "noted"

and promised they will be looked into. The levels of red tape and government sometimes mean responses are slow and solutions are minimal. Yet we must continue to advocate and raise our concerns, because as we are learning, we have become one of the last lines of defence.

The provincial government has been radically cutting every line of defence for the environment. The Greenbelt fiasco (now thankfully reversed), defunding conservation authorities, overuse of Ministerial Zoning Orders, Bill 23, and a multitude of other issues have been forced upon the people of Ontario and the environment. The only consideration has been for "progress" and "growing Ontario". Concerns for the environment and its short and long-term health have not been appropriately considered by the government.

As a result of these changes, First Nations consultation staff have indeed found themselves as essentially the last line of defence. Because the Duty to Consult is federal legislation, it supersedes any shortcut legislation the provincial government puts in place. Therefore, we are still required to be consulted with on matters that may affect our treaty rights. Yet, we are continually battling to ensure that Rama and First Nations' rights are protected as governments and corporates attempt to expedite development at any cost.

Now, every major utility company (e.g. Enbridge Gas, Hydro One) or infrastructure department (e.g. Ministry of Transportation) have a fleet of Indigenous Affairs & Relations Staff who are in place to aid the consultation process. While friendly and often helpful, we have to remind ourselves they represent the organization and the organization's interests. Although many organizations are making major improvements to their internal consultation processes and beliefs, First Nations consultation staff always need to be sharp and highly attuned to what is really going on.

All of this means the world of consultation is an important and demanding field. We will continue to develop our consultation processes and knowledge to protect Rama's harvesting rights. Our goal is to ensure that the next seven generations are able to harvest from the same lands and waters that we do today.

# From the Archives: Mzinaazwinan <sup>pictures</sup>



Gchi miigwech to RFN band member Lisa Zwicker for obtaining these photographs from the United Church Archives. These photos show the Rama United Church and some of our ancestors, dated approximately 1908-1922.



# From the Archives: Mzinaazwinan

The Chippewas of Rama First Nation are an Anishinaabe (Ojibway) community located at Rama First Nation, ON. Our history began with a great migration from the East Coast of Canada into the Great Lakes region. Throughout a period of several hundred years, our direct ancestors again migrated to the north and eastern shores of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay. Our Elders say that we made room in our territory for our allies, the Huron-Wendat Nation, during their times of war with the Haudenosaunee. Following the dispersal of the Huron-Wendat Nation from the region in the mid-1600s, our stories say that we again migrated to our territories in what today is known as Muskoka and Simcoe County. Several major battles with the Haudenosaunee culminated in peace being agreed between the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee, after which the Haudenosaunee agreed to leave the region and remain in southern Ontario. Thus, since the early 18th century, much of central Ontario into the lower parts of northern Ontario has been Anishinaabe territory.

The more recent history of Rama First Nation begins with the creation of the “Coldwater Narrows” reserve, one of the first reserves in Canada. The Crown intended to relocate our ancestors to the Coldwater reserve and ultimately assimilate our ancestors into Euro-Canadian culture. Underlying the attempts to assimilate our ancestors were the plans to take possession of our vast hunting and harvesting territories. Feeling the impacts of increasingly widespread settlement, many of our ancestors moved to the Coldwater reserve in the early 1830s. Our ancestors built homes, mills, and farmsteads along the old portage route which ran through the reserve, connecting Lake Simcoe to Georgian Bay (this route is now called “Highway 12”). After a short period of approximately six years, the Crown had a change of plans. Frustrated at our ancestors continued exploiting of hunting territories (spanning roughly from Newmarket to the south, Kawartha Lakes to the east, Meaford to the west, and Lake Nipissing to the north), as well as unsuccessful assimilation attempts, the Crown reneged on the promise of reserve land. Three of our Chiefs, including Chief Yellowhead, went to York under the impression they were signing documents

affirming their ownership of land and buildings. The Chiefs were misled, and inadvertently allegedly surrendered the Coldwater reserve back to the Crown.

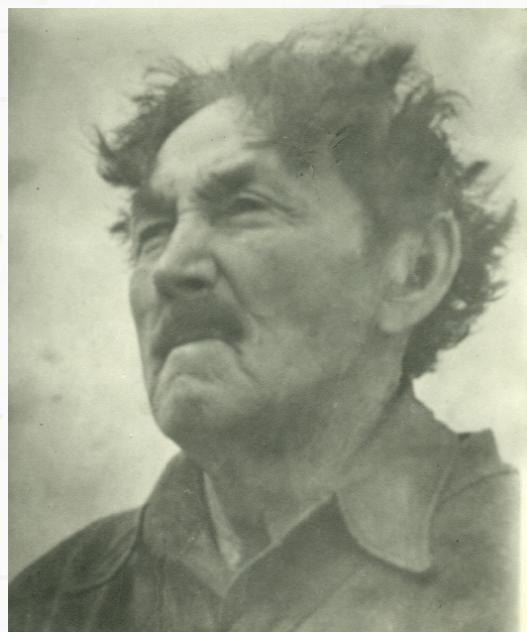
Our ancestors, then known as the Chippewas of Lakes Simcoe and Huron, were left landless. Earlier treaties, such as Treaty 16 and Treaty 18, had already resulted in nearly 2,000,000 acres being allegedly surrendered to the Crown. The Chippewas made the decision to split into three groups. The first followed Chief Snake to Snake Island and Georgina Island (today known as the Chippewas of Georgina Island). The second group followed Chief Aissance to Beausoleil Island, and later to Christian Island (Beausoleil First Nation). The third group, led by Chief Yellowhead, moved to the Narrows between Lakes Simcoe and Couchiching and eventually, Rama (Chippewas of Rama First Nation).

A series of purchases, using Rama’s own funds, resulted in Yellowhead purchasing approximately 1,600 acres of abandoned farmland in Rama Township. This land makes up the core of the Rama Reserve today, and we have called it home since the early 1840’s. Our ancestors began developing our community, clearing fields for farming and building homes. They continued to hunt and harvest in their traditional territories, especially within the Muskoka region, up until the early 1920’s. In 1923, the Williams Treaties were signed, surrendering 12,000,000 acres of previously unceded land to the Crown. Once again, our ancestors were misled, and they were informed that in surrendering the land, they gave up their right to access their seasonal traditional hunting and harvesting territories.

With accessing territories difficult, our ancestors turned to other ways to survive. Many men guided tourists around their former family hunting territories in Muskoka, showing them places to fish and hunt. Others worked in lumber camps and mills. Our grandmothers made crafts such as porcupine quill baskets and black ash baskets, and sold them to tourists visiting Simcoe and Muskoka. The children were forced into Indian Day School, and some were taken away to Residential Schools. Church on the reserve began to indoctrinate our ancestors.

# From the Archives: Mzinaazwinan

*pictures*



Clockwise from top left:  
John Bigwin and unknown  
man; Rama  
binoojinyag in the 70's;  
unknown woman and her  
bebiins in a tiknaagan;  
ancestors at the Rama Fair;  
Ogimaa Alder York



# From the Archives: Mzinaazwinan

*pictures*



Clockwise from top left: unknown kwe and her binoojiinyag; Elwood, John, and Wilson Simcoe; our ancestors participate in the unveiling of the now-removed Champlain monument in Orillia, 1925; former Ogimaa Irvin (Ivan) Douglas stands with Orillia and area dignitaries during an unveiling of the Ontario Heritage Plaque for the "Huron Fish Weirs"; ancestors at the Rama Fair; a bebiins and her animosh.





**GCHI MIIGWECH FOR READING!**